

Employment of police officers and detectives is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2008. A more security-conscious society and concern about drug-related crimes should contribute to the increasing demand for police services. At the local and State levels, growth is likely to continue as long as crime remains a serious concern. However, employment growth at the Federal level will be tempered by continuing budgetary constraints faced by law enforcement agencies. Turnover in police and detective positions is among the lowest of all occupations. Even so, the need to replace workers who retire, transfer to other occupations, or stop working for other reasons will be the source of many job openings.

The level of government spending determines the level of employment for police officers, detectives, and special agents. The number of job opportunities, therefore, can vary from year to year and from place to place. Layoffs, on the other hand, are rare because retirements enable most staffing cuts to be handled through attrition. Trained law enforcement officers who lose their jobs because of budget cuts usually have little difficulty finding jobs with other agencies.

Earnings

In 1998, the median salary of police and detective supervisors was \$48,700 a year. The middle 50 percent earned between \$37,130 and \$69,440; the lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$28,780, while the highest 10 percent earned over \$84,710 a year.

In 1998, the median salary of detectives and criminal investigators was \$46,180 a year. The middle 50 percent earned between \$35,540 and \$62,520; the lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$27,950, and the highest 10 percent earned over \$80,120 a year.

Police patrol officers had a median salary of \$37,710 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$28,840 and \$47,890; the lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$22,270, while the highest 10 percent earned over \$63,530 annually.

Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs had a median annual salary of \$28,270 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$23,310 and \$36,090; the lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$19,070, and the highest 10 percent earned over \$44,420.

Federal law provides special salary rates to Federal employees who serve in law enforcement. Additionally, Federal special agents and inspectors receive law enforcement availability pay (LEAP) or administratively uncontrolled overtime (AUO)—equal to 25 percent of the agent's grade and step—awarded because of the large amount of overtime that these agents are expected to work. For example, in 1999 FBI agents enter service as GS 10 employees on the government pay scale at a base salary of \$34,400, yet earned about \$43,000 a year with availability pay. They can advance to the GS 13 grade level in field non-supervisory assignments at a base salary of \$53,800 which is worth almost \$67,300 with availability pay. Promotions to supervisory, management, and executive positions are available in grades GS 14 and GS 15, which pay a base salary of about \$63,600 or \$74,800 a year, respectively, and equaled \$79,500 or \$93,500 per year, including availability pay. Salaries were slightly higher in selected areas where the prevailing local pay level was higher. Because Federal agents may be eligible for a special law enforcement benefits package, applicants should ask their recruiter for more information.

The International City-County Management Association's annual Police and Fire Personnel, Salaries, and Expenditures Survey revealed that 84 percent of the municipalities surveyed provided police services in 1997. The following pertains to sworn full-time positions in 1997.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Minimum annual base salary</i>	<i>Maximum annual base salary</i>
Police officer	\$28,200	\$38,500
Police Corporal	31,900	39,000
Police Sergeant	38,200	45,100
Police Lieutenant	42,900	51,200
Police Captain	46,500	56,600
Deputy Chief	48,400	59,800
Police Chief	56,300	69,600

Total earnings for local, State, and special police and detectives frequently exceed the stated salary because of payments for overtime, which can be significant. In addition to the common benefits—paid vacation, sick leave, and medical and life insurance—most police and sheriffs' departments provide officers with special allowances for uniforms. Because police officers usually are covered by liberal pension plans, many retire at half-pay after 20 or 25 years of service.

Related Occupations

Police and detectives maintain law and order. Workers in related occupations include correctional officers, guards, and fire marshals.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about entrance requirements may be obtained from Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Further information about qualifications for employment as an FBI Special Agent is available from the nearest State FBI office. The address and phone number are listed in the local telephone directory. Internet: <http://www.fbi.gov>

Information about qualifications for employment as a DEA Special Agent is available from the nearest DEA office, or call (800) DEA-4288. Internet: <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea>

Information about career opportunities, qualifications, and training to become a deputy marshal is available from:

✦ United States Marshals Service, Employment and Compensation Division, Field Staffing Branch, 600 Army Navy Dr., Arlington, VA 2220. Internet: <http://www.usdoj.gov/marshals>

Career opportunities, qualifications, and training for U.S. Secret Service Special Agents is available from:

✦ U.S. Secret Service, Personnel Division, Room 912, 1800 G St. NW., Washington, DC 20223. Internet: <http://www.ustras.gov/uss>

Information on career opportunities and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms operations by writing to:

✦ U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Personnel Division, 650 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Room 4170, Washington, DC 20226. Internet: <http://www.atf.treas.gov>

Information about careers in the United States Border Patrol is available from:

✦ U.S. Border Patrol, Chester A. Arthur Building, 425 I St. NW, Washington DC 20536.

Internet: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/bpmain/index.htm>

Private Detectives and Investigators

(O*Net 63035)

Significant Points

- Work hours are often irregular for beginning detectives and investigators, many of whom work part time.
- Most applicants have related experience in other areas, such as law enforcement, insurance, or the military.
- Stiff competition is expected for better paying jobs because of the large number of qualified people who are attracted to this occupation.

Nature of the Work

Private detectives and investigators use many means to determine the facts in a variety of matters. To carry out investigations, they may use various types of surveillance or searches. To verify facts, such as an individual's place of employment or income, they may make phone calls or visit a subject's workplace. In other cases, especially those involving missing persons and background checks, investigators often interview people to gather as much information as possible about an individual. In all cases, private detectives and investigators assist attorneys, businesses, and the public with a variety of legal, financial, and personal problems.

Private detectives and investigators offer many services, including executive, corporate, and celebrity protection; pre-employment verification; and individual background profiles. They also provide assistance in civil liability and personal injury cases, insurance claims and fraud, child custody and protection cases, and pre-marital screening. Increasingly, they are hired to investigate individuals to prove or disprove infidelity.

Most detectives and investigators are trained to perform physical surveillance, often for long periods of time, in a car or van. They may observe a site, such as the home of a subject, from an inconspicuous location. The surveillance continues using still and video cameras, binoculars, and a cell or car phone, until the desired evidence is obtained. They also perform computer database searches, or work with someone who does. Computers allow detectives and investigators to quickly obtain massive amounts of information on probate records, telephone numbers, motor vehicle registrations, association membership lists, registered sex offenders, and other matters.

The duties of private detectives and investigators depend on the needs of their client. In a case involving fraudulent workers' compensation claims for an employer, for instance, investigators carry out long-term covert observation of the subject. If the investigator observes the subject performing an activity that contradicts injuries stated in a workers' compensation claim, the investigator would take video or still photographs to document the activity and report it to the client.

Private detectives and investigators often specialize. Those who focus on intellectual property theft, for example, investigate and document acts of piracy, help clients stop the illegal activity, and provide intelligence for prosecution and civil action. Other investigators specialize in financial profiles and asset searches. Their reports reflect information gathered through interviews, investigation and surveillance, and research, including review of public documents.

Legal investigators specialize in cases involving the courts and are normally employed by law firms or lawyers. They frequently assist in preparing criminal defenses, locate witnesses, serve legal documents, interview police and prospective witnesses, and gather and review evidence. Legal investigators may also collect information on the parties to the litigation, take photographs, testify in court, and assemble evidence and reports for trials.

Corporate investigators work for corporations other than investigative firms, in which they conduct internal and external investigations. In internal investigations, they may investigate drug use in the workplace, insure that expense accounts are not abused, or determine if employees are stealing merchandise or information. External investigations typically prevent criminal schemes originating outside the corporation, such as theft of company assets through fraudulent billing of products by suppliers.

Detectives and investigators who specialize in finance may be hired to develop confidential financial profiles of individuals or companies who are prospective parties to large financial transactions. These individuals are often Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) and work closely with investment bankers and accountants. They search for assets in order to recover damages awarded by a court in fraud or theft cases.

Detectives who work for retail stores or hotels are responsible for loss control and asset protection. Store detectives, also known as loss prevention agents, safeguard the assets of retail stores by apprehending anyone attempting to steal merchandise or destroy store property. They prevent theft by shoplifters, vendor representatives, delivery personnel, and even store employees. Store detectives also conduct periodic inspections of stock areas, dressing rooms, and rest rooms, and sometimes assist in opening and closing the store. They may prepare loss prevention and security reports for management and testify in court against persons they apprehend. Hotel detectives protect guests of the establishment from theft of their belongings and preserve order in the restaurants and bars in the building. They also may keep undesirable individuals such as known thieves off the premises.



Legal investigators are involved with courts, law firms, and lawyers.

Working Conditions

Private detectives and investigators often work irregular hours because of the need to conduct surveillance and contact people who are not available during normal working hours. Early morning, evening, weekend, and holiday work is common.

Many detectives and investigators spend time away from their offices conducting interviews or doing surveillance, but some work in their office most of the day conducting computer searches and making phone calls. Those who have their own agencies and employ other investigators may work primarily in an office and have normal business hours.

When working on a case away from the office, the environment might range from plush boardrooms to seedy bars. Store and hotel detectives work in the businesses that they protect. Investigators generally work alone, but they sometimes work with others during surveillance or when following a subject in order to avoid detection by the subject.

Some of the work involves confrontation, so the job can be stressful and dangerous. Detectives and investigators who carry handguns must be licensed by the appropriate authority. Some situations call for the investigator to be armed, such as certain bodyguard assignments for corporate or celebrity clients. In most cases, however, a weapon is not necessary because the purpose of their work is gathering information and not law enforcement or criminal apprehension. Owners of investigative agencies have the added stress of having to deal with demanding and sometimes distraught clients.

Employment

Private detectives and investigators held about 61,000 jobs in 1998. About 1 out of 4 was self-employed. Approximately a third of salaried private detectives and investigators worked for detective agencies, while another third were employed as store detectives in department or clothing and accessories stores. The remainder worked for hotels and other lodging places, legal services firms, and in other industries.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

There are no formal education requirements for most private detective and investigator jobs, although many private detectives have college degrees. Almost all private detectives and investigators have previous experience in other occupations. Some work initially for insurance or collections companies or in the private security industry. Many investigators enter the field after serving in military, government intelligence, or law enforcement jobs.

Former law enforcement officers, military investigators, and government agents often become private detectives or investigators as a second career because they are frequently able to retire after 20 years of service. Others enter from such diverse fields as finance, accounting, commercial credit, investigative reporting, insurance, and law. These individuals

often can apply their prior work experience in a related investigative specialty. A few enter the occupation directly after graduation from college, generally with associate or bachelor of criminal justice or police science degrees.

The majority of the States and the District of Colombia require private detectives and investigators to be licensed by the State or local authorities. Licensing requirements vary widely. Some States have few requirements, and 5 States—Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Mississippi, and South Dakota—have no Statewide licensing requirements, while others have stringent regulations. For example, the California Department of Consumer Affairs, Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, requires private investigators to be 18 years of age or older; have a combination of education in police science, criminal law, or justice, and experience equaling 3 years (6,000 hours) of investigative experience; pass an evaluation by the Department of Justice and a criminal history background check; and receive a qualifying score on a 2-hour written examination covering laws and regulations. There are additional requirements for a firearms permit. A growing number of States are enacting mandatory training programs for private detectives and investigators. In most States, convicted felons cannot receive a license.

For private detective and investigator jobs, most employers look for individuals with ingenuity who are persistent and assertive. A candidate must not be afraid of confrontation, should communicate well, and should be able to think on his or her feet. Good interviewing and interrogation skills also are important and are usually acquired in earlier careers in law enforcement or other fields. Because the courts are often the ultimate judge of a properly conducted investigation, the investigator must be able to present the facts in a manner a jury will believe.

Training in subjects such as criminal justice are helpful to aspiring private detectives and investigators. Most corporate investigators must have a bachelor's degree, preferably in a business-related field. Some corporate investigators have master's degrees in business administration or law, while others are certified public accountants. Corporate investigators hired by large companies may receive formal training from their employers on business practices, management structure, and various finance-related topics. The screening process for potential employees typically includes a background check of a candidate's criminal history.

Some investigators receive certification from a professional organization to demonstrate competency in a field. For example, the National Association of Legal Investigators (NALI) confers the designation Certified Legal Investigator on licensed investigators who devote a majority of their practice to negligence or criminal defense investigations. To receive the designation, applicants must satisfy experience, educational, and continuing training requirements, and must pass written and oral exams administered by the NALI.

Most private detective agencies are small, with little room for advancement. Usually there are no defined ranks or steps, so advancement takes the form of increases in salary and assignment status. Many detectives and investigators work for detective agencies at the beginning of their careers and after a few years start their own firms. Corporate and legal investigators may rise to supervisor or manager of the security or investigations department.

Job Outlook

Stiff competition is expected because private detective and investigator careers attract many qualified people, including relatively young retirees from law enforcement and military careers. Opportunities will be best for entry-level jobs with detective agencies or as store detectives on a part-time basis. Those seeking store detective jobs have the best prospects with large chains and discount stores.

Employment of private detectives and investigators is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2008. In addition to growth, replacement of those who retire or leave the occupation for other reasons should create many additional job openings, particularly among salaried workers. Increased demand for private detectives and investigators will result from fear of crime, increased litigation, and the need to protect confidential information and property of all kinds. More private investigators also will be needed to assist attorneys working on criminal defense and civil litigation. Growing financial activity worldwide will increase the demand for investigators to control internal and external financial losses, and to monitor competitors and prevent industrial spying.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of private detectives and investigators were \$21,020 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$16,340 and \$31,520. The lowest 10 percent had earnings of less than \$14,050, while the top 10 percent earned over \$42,560. Department stores, where store detectives work, paid an average of \$17,600 per year, while miscellaneous business services, where private investigators firms are found, paid an average of about \$29,200 annually in 1997.

Earnings of private detectives and investigators vary greatly depending on their employer, specialty, and the geographic area in which they work. According to a study by Abbott, Langer & Associates, security/loss prevention directors and vice presidents averaged \$65,500 a year in 1998; investigators, \$49,300; and store detectives, \$17,700. In addition to typical benefits, most corporate investigators received profit-sharing plans.

Related Occupations

Private detectives and investigators often collect information and protect the property and other assets of companies. Others with related duties include security guards, insurance claims examiners, inspectors, bill collectors, and law enforcement officers. Investigators who specialize in conducting financial profiles and asset searches perform work closely related to that of accountants and financial analysts.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on local licensing requirements, contact your State Department of Public Safety, State Division of Licensing, or your local or State police headquarters.

For information on a career as a legal investigator, contact:

✉ The National Association of Legal Investigators, P.O. Box 905, Grand Blanc, MI 48439. Internet: <http://www.nali.com/index.htm>